Research Notes for Ellen Delaney / Lane Cornell Roach (1837 - 1886)

Research Overview:

Ellen Delaney appears to have deliberately obscured her family background. She enters the record without documented parents or siblings and under multiple surnames—Delaney, Lane, Cornell, and later Roach. There is no single record that securely ties Ellen to a specific family, place, or identity at the start of her life. For many women, identity can be reconstructed because records exist that link them to parents or spouses. For Ellen, those records are missing, and what defines her earliest life is not what appears in documents, but what never appears at all.

What persists in place of documentation is a narrow and consistent family narrative. DNA evidence points to William Delaney, possibly Ellen's brother, and descendants of both William and Ellen recount the same account of their origins—parents unidentified, no known siblings, and only a vague, misleading story about the family's past. A descendant of William Delaney, Michelle, reports a closely aligned narrative.

Ellen's first marriage to John Cornell was brief, noted only in a short newspaper announcement. Based on the birth timing of her first daughter with her second husband, Charles Roach, Ellen appears to have remarried while still nursing her second child, Eleanor Cornell. The dates for this period must therefore be estimated, as the marriage to Charles would have occurred between the births of Eleanor Cornell and Sarah Roach. After this point, Ellen enters a longer and more stable household with Charles Henry Roach. Census records preserve the sequence of surnames and households.

For the rest of her life, Ellen and Charles raise their children. She remains present in the record as wife and mother, sustained by a stable household that places her children repeatedly in census records. Because the children are named and persist, their later records become traceable (marriages, deaths, burials). Her life can therefore be reconstructed forward through continuity, not backward through origin records.

Timeline:

Ellen (also recorded as Elinor) Delaney / Lane / Cornell

28 Sep 1837 – Born probably in Ireland, possibly Canada.[1]

The 28 Sep date is from R Pinnell's family bible - no year is listed, so this year is calculated from her gravestone.

The 1842 Census of Canada

Research: Locate the Delaney or Lane families on the 1842 Census of Canada West.

The 1851 Census of Canada is incomplete
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Beverly, where Ellen lived when she married in 1853, is missing Part 1 and in Part 2 only contains Wards 3, 4, and 5. No records for Ellen Lane are in the surviving pieces for Beverly. No information was found for John Cornell in the 1851 Census in Ancaster or Beverly either. We were unable to find any other information on John Cornell.

Ellen appears in records under multiple surnames during this period, including Delaney, Lane, and Cornell.

24 Mar 1853 - Marriage to John Cornell in Dumfries, Ontario, Canada.[2]

Christian Guardian (Toronto) newspaper (issue 30 Mar 1853). I was re-reading the marriage notice for John Cornell and Hellen DeLaney in 1853. I still like that one! Especially the comment in the record that both were from Capetown (sic., Copetown).

Marriage to John Cornell, noted only in a brief newspaper announcement.

[1] Birth Record is from the Pinnell family bible, in the possession of Richard Pinnell.

[2] "Married" The Christian Guardian, Toronto, Canada, volume. 24, no. 25, 30 March 1853, page 99, column 7, John Cornell - Hellen DeLaney entry.

7 Aug 1854 - Birth of son William Francis "Frank" Cornell (1854 - 1916) in Copetown, Wentworth, Ontario, Canada.[3]
No source has been found for William Cornell's birth. Also, no such luck with the baptisms. Richard Pinnell has searched exhaustively for these baptisms, including contacting the Huron Diocese (Anglican church), but no luck. "The first two children (Charles and Eleanor) were born close to where I live (in Waterloo County."

19 Aug 1855 - Birth of daughter Elinor Ann Cornell (1855 - 1937) in Copetown, Wentworth, Ontario, Canada.[4]
Elinor's Michigan death record has a birth date of Aug 19, 1855. No baptismal record was found.

No record has been identified documenting John Cornell's death or the dissolution of this marriage.

1855 - Death of husband John Cornell (1835 - 1855) in Canada.[5]

John Cornell either passed away or abandoned his family sometime between the conception of his youngest child (around December 1854) and the conception of Charles Henry Roach and Ellen Delaney's first child, Sarah, on April 8, 1856."Approximated death date. Is he the John W. Cornell on Find a Grave? Memorial 202419013?

Her second husband, Charles Roach, was discharged from the English Army 66th Foot Regiment in Toronto, Canada.

1855 - Marriage to Charles Henry Roach in Canada.[6]

Marriage to Charles Henry Roach, estimated to have occurred between the births of Eleanor Cornell and Sarah Roach.

No marriage record has been identified for Charles Roach and Ellen Lane. Charles joined the army in Kent County, England, and mustered out of the 66th Regiment of Foot in Toronto, Canada, because he was English; there are no immigration records. Shortly after, he is with Ellen. Whether

[3] The year of his birth is mentioned in Canadian and US census records. "Michigan, Death Records, 1867-1950," Ancestry.

[4] Michigan, Death Records, 1867-1950, Ancestry.com

[5] My hypothesis of death date.

[6] My hypothesis of marriage date.

Charles and Ellen were formally married or lived as a married couple cannot be determined, but they established a household together and had five children.

8 Jan 1857 - Birth of daughter Sarah Elizabeth Roach (1857 - 1911) at Berlin, Ontario, Canada.[7]
No birth or baptismal record has been found.

13 Nov 1860 - Birth of son Charles Henry Roach (1860 - 1927) at Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.[8]
No birth or baptismal record has been found.

The household includes children born before and after Ellen's relationship with Charles Roach, reflected in the use of both the Cornell and Roach surnames.

From this point forward, Ellen's household and family structure are tracked primarily through census records.

1861- Census of Canada at Ontario, Canada.[9]

Charles Roach, 36
Elinor Roach, 23
William F Roach, 6
Elinor Ann Roach, 5

No records were known for Charles Roach or his wife, Ellen Delaney, before 1861.

[7] USA Death Registration, State of Michigan #880, states that Sarah Elizabeth Roach was born 8 January 1857 in Canada.

[8] "Canada, Ontario Deaths, 1869-1937 and Overseas Deaths, 1939-1947", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JKWK-4ZZ: Tue Jul 16 06:39:41 UTC 2024), Entry for Charles Roach and Charles Roach, 05 Mar 1927.

[9] "Canada, Ontario Census, 1861", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQQL-ZDQ: Sat Jul 06 12:24:29 UTC 2024), Entry for Elinor Roach, 1861.

1862 - Birth of daughter Mary Margaret Roach (1862 - 1919) at Thorndale, Ontario, Canada.[10]

Mary Margaret's death record reported she was born in Minden, [Haliburton Co.,] Ontario. But her family was living at Thorndale in 1861, and her brother George was born there in 1863

6 Sep 1863 - Birth of son George Walter Roach (1863 - 1924) at Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.[11]

29 May 1865 - Birth of son Samuel James Roach (1865 - 1936) at Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.[12]

The source of his birth date was his Michigan Death Record. No birth or baptismal record has been found

1871- Census of Canada at Ontario, Canada.[13]

Charles Roach, 46
Elinar Roach, 49
William F Roach, 17
Elinar Roach, 16
Sarah Roach, 14
Charles H Roach, 12
Maria M Roach, 9
George W Roach, 7
Samuel Roach, 6

1881- Census of Canada at Ontario, Canada.[14]

Charles Roach, 57
Ellen Roach, 47

[10] Ontario, Canada Deaths, 1869-1934, Ancestry. Roll: MS935_259.

[11] Ontario, Canada Deaths, 1869-1934, Ancestry. Roll: MS935_310.

[12] "Michigan Death Certificates, 1921-1952", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KF32-RC6: Tue Jul 16 08:28:32 UTC 2024), Entry for Samuel J Roach and Charles H Roach, 12 May 1936.

[13] "Canada Census, 1871", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4QT-17M: Fri Mar 08 08:43:51 UTC 2024), Entry for Charles Roach and Elinar Roach, 1871.

[14] "Canada Census, 1881", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MVDZ-VBV: Sat Mar 09 12:23:04 UTC 2024), Entry for Charles Roach and Ellen Roach, 1881.

Charles H Roach, 21
Mary Roach, 19
George Roach, 17
Samuel Roach, 6

12 May 1886 - Death of Ellen Delaney / Lane (1837 - 1886) at Petersburg, Ontario, Canada.[15]

May 1866 - Burial at Emmanuel Lutheran Church Cemetery, Petersburg, Ontario, Canada.

[15] Death of Ellen Elenore Roach, 12 May 1886, No. 018143; Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 45, Ancestry.com Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869 - 1938

Appendix:

Ellen Lane: A Woman of Mystery

The life of Ellen Lane (also recorded as Elenore Delaney or Helen Delaney) is steeped in unanswered questions and scant records. Before her marriage to Charles Henry Roach, Ellen's past remains elusive. Her secrecy, Anglicized name, and lack of records leave many gaps in her story, though family traditions and a few documents offer tantalizing clues.

The Challenge of Researching Ellen's Past

Records from Ontario before 1860 are sparse, and passenger lists for immigrants to Canada during this period are equally hard to locate. UK records before 1841 present additional challenges, especially in Kent and Canterbury, where Charles Henry Roach was born. Though small, Canterbury had numerous churches, complicating searches in parish registers.

Ellen first clearly appears in the 1861 Canadian Census as the wife of Charles Henry Roach and the mother of four children. Two of these, Frank and Elinor Ann Cornell, were from her first marriage to John Cornell, who died around the time of Elinor Ann's birth in August 1855. No death record or burial site has been found for John.

Conflicting Records: Was She Lane or Delaney?

Two earlier records hint at Ellen's identity:

1. A newspaper announcement of the 1853 marriage of John Cornell to "Helen Delaney," with both listed as from "Capetown" (likely a misspelling of Copetown, Ontario). Copetown did have Delaney families at the time, adding credibility to this connection.

2. A family Bible entry recorded by Ellen's grandson, Ernest Pinnell, after her death states her name as Ellen Lane.

These conflicting records leave room for speculation:
- Was she Helen Delaney, and did she adopt the name Ellen Lane after John's death? This might have been an effort to sound more English or to reinvent herself.
- Was her maiden name always Ellen Lane, and the newspaper entry for "Helen Delaney" a reporting error?
- Could the 1853 marriage announcement belong to a different couple?

Life with Charles Henry Roach

Records have not been found for Ellen's second marriage to Charles Henry Roach. Perhaps they had a common-law marriage. It's possible they married as late as March 1856, nine months before their first child, Sarah Roach, was born in December of that year. Together, Ellen and Charles had five children: Sarah, Charles, Mary, George, and Samuel.

By 1861, the family lived in Missouri West Township, Middlesex County, where Charles worked for the Grand Trunk Railway. This connection raises another question:
- Did Ellen's father or brother also work for the Grand Trunk Railway, potentially connecting her to Charles through their employment?

DNA: The Key to Ellen's Origins?

Traditional genealogical records have yielded little information about Ellen's family. DNA testing might provide breakthroughs by identifying descendants of her siblings, aunts, and uncles. DNA evidence could also explore connections to the Delaney families in Copetown, Ontario.

Known Facts and Speculation

- Birth and Death: Ellen was reportedly born on September 28, 1837, in Toronto, Ontario (then known as Canada West), and died on May 12, 1886, in Petersburg, Wilmot Township, Waterloo County, Ontario.
- Children from Two Marriages: Ellen had two children with John Cornell (Frank and Elinor Ann) and five with Charles Henry Roach.
- Residence: Ellen and Charles appeared in the 1861 census as a family living in a one-family frame home in Middlesex County.

Open Questions

1. Ellen's Maiden Name: Ellen Lane or Helen Delaney? Or was her name an amalgamation of both identities?
2. Marriage to John Cornell: Is the 1853 marriage record for John Cornell and "Helen Delaney" in Copetown correct?
3. Connection to Charles Roach: Did Charles know Ellen or her family before marrying her? Could their paths have crossed through the Grand Trunk Railway or other shared connections?
4. Delaney Family in Copetown: Could DNA links to Delaney families in this area confirm Ellen's maiden name?

5. Charles's Origins: Why did Charles emigrate from Kent, England, to Canada? Was he following an opportunity connected to Ellen or her family?

Conclusion

Ellen Lane, or Helen Delaney, remains a figure shrouded in mystery. Whether she changed her name to escape her past or as a matter of practicality, the lack of records has left much of her story untold. DNA evidence and further research into Delaney's families and Grand Trunk Railway connections may one day illuminate her origins. For now, Ellen steps out of the mist in 1861, leaving behind a legacy of intrigue and unanswered questions.

B.
Ellen Delaney appears to have deliberately obscured her family background. No records have been identified for her parents or siblings, yet DNA evidence points to William Delaney, possibly her brother; descendants of both William and Ellen share the same family account—parents unidentified, no known siblings, and a consistent but vague story about the family's past. A descendant of William Delaney, Michelle, reports a closely aligned narrative. The family was likely Catholic and Irish in origin, though later accounts in Canada shifted to claim Protestant roots.
Earlier DNA analysis focused on a shared match with John Abraham Cornell, brother of Sarah Butler Cornell, as a potential avenue for reconstructing Ellen Delaney's origins. Subsequent research has clarified this connection. Sarah Butler, who married Ellen's son William Cornell, was the granddaughter of Mary Rook Butler, the half-sister of Charles Henry Rook / Roach. The shared DNA, therefore, reflects overlap within Charles's extended family rather than evidence of Ellen's birth family. While DNA evidence remains relevant—particularly given how effectively it clarified Charles's background—it must be interpreted cautiously in Ellen's case. The persistent absence of contemporaneous records for Ellen's parents and early life continues to define the limits of what can be stated with confidence.

C. Charles married ELLEN LANE circa 1855. "A marriage record has not been found for Charles and Ellen Roach. At the time of their marriage, Ellen was the widow of John Cornell and the mother of John's children, William and Eleanor Cornell."53 Ellen was born on 28 September 1837 in Copetown, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and died on 12 May 1886 in Petersburg, Wilmot Township, Waterloo, Ontario. 54 She was buried in May 1886 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church Cemetery in Petersburg. Ellen married first JOHN CORNELL on 24 March 1853 at the Wesleyan Parsonage in Dumfries Township, Ontario, Canada. Reverend F. Berry, a traveling minister, performed the

marriage. John was born on 24 March 1835 in Dumfries and died in 1855.56. According to the newspaper account of her first marriage, in 1853, she lived in Copetown, a small community in Beverly Township, Wentworth County.57 No record of Ellen has been found before her marriage.58 The newspaper account for her first marriage recorded her surname as Delaney, but no other record has been found for Ellen using this surname.
Charles Rook served in the British Army's 66th Regiment of Foot in 1841 in Gosport, England. 59 The 66th Regiment of Foot was in Canada in 1840 and later was sent to Gibraltar in July 1845 and then to the West Indies in 1848.60 Charles was listed as serving in the regiment in 1851 while in Barbados, West Indies.61 The Regiment was then sent back to Canada in 1851 and had soldiers stationed in Toronto, Montreal, and Quebec.62 Charles retired soon after and received a gratuity of £10.63 "Charles Rook's retirement from the military is right about the time that Charles Henry Roach appears in Canada and marries Ellen Lane. It may be that
After several years in the military service, the last three years in Canada, Charles decided to stay in Canada, where he may have felt there were more opportunities for him."64

The military records combined with DNA matches for Mary Beth Mueller and other family members provide strong evidence that Charles Rook was the same Charles Henry Roach who married Ellen Lane.65

Charles, now known as Charles Roach, worked as a section foreman for the Grand Trunk Railway in Canada. For a period of time, the Roach family lived in Berlin (now Kitchener) around 1857 and then in Thorndale, a village between London and Stratford in Ontario in the early 1860s. Charles was one of the first section foremen in Thorndale, and the family was one of the early families associated with St. George's Anglican Church in Thorndale.66 According to the 1861 Census of Canada, the family lived in a one-story frame house in Thorndale. Charles was a member of the Church of England, and the four children were Wesleyan Methodists. Between 1865 and 1867, the family moved to Petersburg in Wilmot Township, where Charles worked as a section foreman for the Grand Trunk Railway. When the family was enumerated on the 1871 Census of Canada in Petersburg, all the family members were members of the Anglican Church but attended the local Emmanuel Lutheran Church.